

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINSHA 05128 01 OF 02 212049Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SCS-06

CA-01 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 AID-05 PC-01

ICAE-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 ARA-10 /110 W

-----073581 212105Z /63

O 212015Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9877

INFO AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 5128

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MILI, CG

SUBJECT: SHABA ATTACK: DEBRIEFING OF FATHERS CYRIL WAGNER AND
VALERIUS MESSERICH, AMCIT EVACUEES FROM KOLWEZI

REF: KINSHASA 5125

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR CUTLER AND EMBOFFS DEBRIEFED AMCIT CATHOLIC FATHERS CYRIL WAGNER AND VALERIUS MESSERICH LATE EVENING MAY 20 SHORTLY AFTER THEIR EVACUATION FROM KOLWEZI. WAGNER HAD REMAINED AT THE BELGIAN SCHOOL (COLLEGE JEAN XXIII) ON THE EDGE OF KOLWEZI'S BUSINESS DISTRICT DURING THE OCCUPATION OF THE CITY, WHILE MESSERICH STAYED IN ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL AFRICAN QUARTERS, THE CITE MANIKA. BOTH HAD FREQUENT CONTACT WITH ZAIRIAN ASSOCIATES WHO WERE ALLOWED COMPLETE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. WAGNER WITNESSED THE INVADERS STREAMING INTO THE CITY IN SMALL GROUPS OF SIX TO TEN MEN FROM APPROXIMATELY 0630 TO 1000 MAY 13. HE SAW NO EVIDENCE OF FAZ RESISTANCE. REBELS WORE CAMOUFLAGE FATIGUES WITH TIGER SHOULDER PATCH. MANY ALSO WORE CARTRIDGE BANDOLIERS. INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS WERE CARBINES AND PISTOLS; SOME BAZOOKAS AND MORTARS WERE ALSO EVIDENT.
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PAGE 02 KINSHA 05128 01 OF 02 212049Z

3. A GROUP OF REBELS, WHO CONVERSED IN SWAHILI BUT ALSO SPOKE POOR FRENCH, SEARCHED THE SCHOOL SATURDAY MORNING FOR RADIO TRANSMITTERS. BECAUSE WAGNER WAS WEARING BOOTS, THEY INITIALLY ACCUSED HIM OF BEING A MERCENARY; WAGNER'S COLLEAGUES WERE FINALLY ABLE TO DISABUSE THEM AND THUS SAVED HIM FROM BEING TAKEN AWAY. LATER IN THE WEEK A REBEL

COMMANDANT AND A POLITICAL COMMISSAIR VISITED THE SCHOOL AND APPOINTED ONE OF THE SCHOOL'S ZAIRIAN EMPLOYEES AS "COMMANDANT" FOR THE SCHOOL WITH FREEDOM TO MOVE ABOUT TOWN LOOKING FOR PROVISIONS. CONTARY TO INITIAL REPORTS, THE APPROXIMATELY FORTY INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD SOUGHT REFUGE AT THE SCHOOL WERE NOT AT ANY TIME HELD AS HOSTAGES BY THE REBELS.

4. WAGNER SAW NO EVIDENCE OF NON-AFRICANS AMONG THE REBELS. THE ONLY LANGUAGES HE HEARD THEM USE WERE SWAHILI AND FRENCH. AFTER MAKING THEIR PRESENCE EMPHATICALLY KNOWN SATURDAY, AND SUNDAY, THE REBELS BECAME LESS VISIBLE EARLY IN THE FOLLOWING WEEK.

5. MESSERICH HEARD CONSIDERABLE GUNFIRE IN THE VICINITY OF THE AIRPORT EARLY MORNING MAY 13, AND WAS SOON VISITED BY THE FIRST OF MANY GROUPS OF REBELS. THOSE OBSERVED BY MESSERICH WORE TWO DISTINCT UNIFORMS: THE CAMOUFLAGE FATIGUES DESCRIBED BY WAGNER, AND THE KHAKI FATIGUES DESCRIBED BY AMSTUTZ. ALL WORE A TIGER SHOULD PATCH. THEIR WEAPONS WERE CARBINES AND PISTOLS, WITH SOME BAZOOKAS AND MORTARS.

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PAGE 01 KINSHA 05128 02 OF 02 212057Z
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9878
INFO AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KINSHASA 5128

6. THE REBELS INITIALLY SEARCHED THE RESIDENCE MESSERICH SHARED WITH TWO OTHER CATHOLIC FATHERS FOR RADIOO TRANSMITTERS. THEY SEEMED NAIVE, AT ONE POINT MISTAKING AN ELECTRIC RAZOR FOR A RADIO. THEY WERE ALS EXTREMELY HUNGRY AND THIRSTY, AND HELPED THEMSELVES TO FOOD AND DRINK. A BELGIAN TEACHER COLLEAGUE OF MESSERICH RECOGNIZED ONE OF THE REBELS AS A FORMER LUNDA STUDENT FROM KAPANGA.

7. ANOTHER GROUP OF REBELS RETURNED SUNDAY EVENING IN AN UGLY

MOOD AND ORDERED MESSERICH AND HIS TWO COLLEAGUES OUTSIDE. ONE REBEL AIMED A PISTOL IN THE AIR AND PULLED THE TRIGGER, BUT THE PISTOL MISFIRED. GUNS WERE AIMED AT THE MISSIONARIES AND THREATS MADE. MESSERICH BELIEVES THE REBELS INITIALLY INTENDED TO KILL HIM, BUT SUDDENLY CHANGED THEIR MINDS. THEY ACTED AS IF DRUNK OR HIGH ON HASHISH. THEY SAID THEY WERE ANGRY BECAUSE SOME UNIDENTIFIED WHITES HAD ATTACKED AN AUTOMOBILE CARRYING FOUR REBELS, WHO WERE BURNED TO DEATH WHEN THE VEHICLE BURST INTO FLAMES.

8. ACCORDING TO MESSERICH'S SERVANT, THE REBELS WERE VERY DISAPPOINTED WHEN THE MAN IN THE STREET HAD NOT CHEERED THEIR ARRIVAL BUT HAD REMAINED APATHHETIC. THE LOCAL POPULATION WAS NOT MISTREATED BY THE REBELS, BUT FAMILIES KEPT THEIR CHILDREN OFF THE STREETS JUST IN CASE. AS FOOD RAN OUT, ZAIRIANS BEGAN TO

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PAGE 02 KINSHA 05128 02 OF 02 212057Z

LEAVE KOLWEZI; THEIR EXODUS ONCE NEWS BROADCAST BEGAN CARRYING THE STORY OF AN IMMINENT FRENCH INTERVENTION. MESSERICH ESTIMATED THAT 90 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION OF HIS NEIGHBORHOOD HAD LEFT BY MAY 20.

9. THE REBELS SAID THEY HAD WALKED FOR TEN DAYS FROM ANGOLA VIA ZAMBIA. ONE OF THEIR FIRST ACTIONS WAS TO EMPTY PRISONS IN KOLWEZI. INITIALLY THE REBELS TALKED OF MOVING ON TO TAKE LIKASI AND LUBUMBASHI. ON WEDNESDAY THEY BROUGHT IN A TRAIN FROM THE DIRECTION OF MUTSHATSHA CARRYING FOOD SUPPLIES. ONCE THE FRENCH PARADROP WAS ANNOUNCED, HOWEVER, THEY BEGAN TALKING OF DESTROYING AS MUCH OF THE GECAMINES INSTALLATIONS AS POSSIBLE, PULLING OUT, AND THEN RETURNING ONCE THE FRENCH LEFT. MANY REBELS MOVED INTO A NEW MIDDLE-CLASS ZAIRIAN SUBURB CALLED CITE DIUR, BUT THEY MOVED OUT AGAIN MAY 18-19. MESSERICH SAW REBELS IN UNIFORM IN HIS NEIGHBORHOOD THE MORNING OF MAY 20. HE FIRST SAW BELGIAN AND FRENCH PARAS AT APPROXIMATELY 1400 THAT AFTERNOON.

10. MESSERICH WAS TOLD THAT THE FAZ PARAS DROPPED IN THE VICINITY OF THE KOLWEZI AIRFIELD MAY 16 WERE WIPED OUT BY THE REBELS. ASIDE FROM THE SKIRMISHING AT THE AIRPORT EARLY MAY 13, FAZ APPEARED TO HIM TO HAVE PUT UP LITTLE RESISTANCE TO THE INVADERS.

11. BOTH WAGNER AND MESSERICH ASSUMED THAT ONE OF THE REBELS' MAJOR OBJECTIVES WAS TO TERRORIZE THE EUROPEAN POPULATION IN ORDER TO CONVINCE THEM TO LEAVE KOLWEZI AND NOT RETURN. THEY FEEL THE REBELS WERE VERY SUCCESSFUL IN THIS REGARD.

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